In the claims:

All claims standing for examination are reproduced below. There are no amendments to the claims or specification in the present response

1. (Previously presented) A method of reallocating switching circuitry in a switching fabric to permit data transfer among a plurality of interface units each having a plurality of data ports, the switching fabric being partitionable into a plurality of switch planes such that each switch plane is assignable to transfer data associated with a data port of the plurality of interface units and each switch plane including multiple switching data communication links each being assignable to transfer data associated with one data port of one of the interface units, the method comprising:

determining a number of interface units connected to the switching fabric;

determining a number of switching data communication links in each switch plane ; and

if the number of interface units is less than the number of switching data communication links in each switch plane, for at least one of the plurality of switch planes, assigning a first data communication link in the switch plane to transfer data associated with a first data port of a first interface unit and assigning a second data communication link in the switch plane to transfer data associated with a second data port of the first interface unit.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein each interface unit comprises twelve data ports.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein each switch plane comprises sixteen switching data communication links.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein switching circuitry is reallocated such that the number of switch planes in the switching fabric can be reduced.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein the switching circuitry is reallocated such that the number of switch planes in the switching fabric can be reduced by one half.

6. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1 wherein switching data communication links in the switch planes are assigned to data ports via an allocation table stored in a memory.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6 wherein the switching circuitry is reallocated by updating the allocation table.

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for reallocating switching circuitry in a switching fabric to permit data transfer among a plurality of interface units each having a plurality of data ports, the switching fabric being partitionable into a plurality of switch planes such that each switch plane is assignable to transfer data associated with a data port of the plurality of interface units and each switch plane including multiple switching data communication links each being assignable to transfer data associated with one data port of one of the interface units, the apparatus comprising:

a memory for storing an allocation table that stores assignments of the switching data communication links to data ports of the interface units; and

a processor ~~(I)~~ (i) determining a number of interface units connected to the switching fabric, (ii) determining a number of switching data communication links in each switch plane, and (iii) if the number of interface units is less than the number of switching data communication links in each switch plane, for at least out of the plurality

of switch planes, assigning a first data communication link in the switch plane to transfer data associated with a first data port of a first interface unit and assigning a second data communication link in the switch plane to transfer data associated with a second data port of the first interface unit.

9. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the processor updates the allocation table to include new assignments of the switching data communication links to data ports of the interface units.

10. (Previously presented) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein each interface unit comprises twelve data ports.

11. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein each switch plane comprises sixteen switching data communication links.

12. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein switching circuitry is reallocated such that the number of switch planes in the switching fabric can be reduced.

13. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein the switching circuitry is reallocated such that the number of switch planes in the switching fabric can be reduced by one half.

14. (Previously presented) The method of claim 8 wherein the switching circuitry is reallocated by updating the allocation table.